

SECRECY, "DIRTY TRICKS" AT HEART OF CIA BATTLE

MORE THAN EVER, the future shape of American intelligence operations is hanging in the balance.

In the eye of the storm is the Central Intelligence Agency. A major battle is building to a climax between Congress and the White House over the eventual role of that Agency: Whether it is to be partly dismantled and reined in—or whether its covert operations are to be continued and its secrets protected by law.

Two developments point up the main issues of the controversy:

- The assassination on December 23 of the CIA station chief in Athens, Rich-

plains that employees of his organization—present and past—are free to reveal the most sensitive secrets without fear of criminal prosecution.

Second, in the case of Angola, the Administration made extensive efforts to keep Congress up to date on operations there.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asserts that congressional committees with supervisory responsibilities "were briefed on 25 separate occasions about what we were doing in Angola."

Yet, in mid-December, the Senate voted abruptly to bar the financing of any further covert operations in support

committees will recommend one or the other of these courses:

- Carry through a far-reaching reorganization of the CIA—including possibly a move to limit the Agency to the collection and analysis of intelligence, while barring it from covert operations aimed at undermining or influencing foreign governments.

- Allow the CIA to retain control of covert operations but subject it to closer congressional scrutiny—possibly with a new joint intelligence committee representing both the Senate and House assigned the job of watchdog.

Administration proposal. As part of the White House's reorganization package, Congress in all likelihood will be pressed to enact legislation proposed by Mr. Colby to give the CIA authority to prosecute employees who violate their secrecy oath.

That is certain to touch off a heated debate in view of strong feelings of a number of leading Congressmen against a U.S. version of Britain's Official Secrets Act, and criticism of Government secrecy generally.

The December 23 assassination of Mr. Welch, however, may strengthen the Administration's hand in fighting for such legislation.

In recent months, Mr. Colby privately has warned that the lives of American intelligence agents overseas were being jeopardized by leaks—coming principally from former CIA agents—that identified those officials and divulged secret operations.

Some observers predict a backlash as a result of the murder of the CIA station chief in Athens. Senator Frank Church (Dem.), of Idaho, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, seemed sensitive to this danger. He was quick to issue a categorical denial to a charge by a former CIA officer that Congress must share the blame for Mr. Welch's death.

When Colby leaves—One factor in the controversy over the future of the CIA is still to be fully assessed:

It will be George Bush, a Texas politician nominated by President Ford, who will be representing the Administration in its contest with Congress over the future of the CIA, not Mr. Colby.

Mr. Bush is a former member of Congress and popular with many leaders on Capitol Hill. His contacts are much wider than those of Mr. Colby, a veteran intelligence official.

But the Bush replacement of Mr. Colby—on confirmation by the Senate—is expected to do little to appease congressional critics bent on overhauling the intelligence operation, limiting the CIA's authority and bringing the



Body of CIA officer Richard Welch arrives in the nation's capital for burial. His slaying in Greece has become a factor in the debate over reforming the intelligence agency.

ard S. Welch, is bringing to a head a debate over the need for legislation to prevent leaks of sensitive information endangering intelligence operations—and the lives of agents—overseas.

- The crisis in Angola is spotlighting the CIA's continuing role in covert operations abroad—and the difficulty of Congress in establishing its own effective control over such operations.

Behind these developments—

First, Mr. Welch had been identified as a ranking Agency official by Fifth Estate, a Washington-based organization dedicated to exposing what it considers to be improper U.S. intelligence activities. A dissident former CIA agent—who has published the names of scores of his former colleagues—collaborates with this group.

of anti-Soviet forces in that former Portuguese colony in Africa.

A powerful group in Congress is pushing to shift control of such activities out of the CIA or abolish them altogether—despite Secretary Kissinger's argument that a capability for covert actions is essential for U.S. security.

Coming up in weeks ahead are three separate sets of recommendations concerning reform of the Agency.

Senate and House select committees that have been conducting wide-ranging investigations into all official intelligence activities are drafting reports.

Then, too, President Ford intends in the next several weeks to produce his own "comprehensive proposals" for reforming the CIA in an effort to forestall more radical congressional schemes.